

REVIEW: The Machine In The Garden – “Out Of The Mists”

By Mike Ventarola

The major labels should take a page from the Middle Pillar Presents series of releases when it comes to providing the consumer with quality. The latest The Machine In The Garden release, **Out of The Mists**, is in a special digi-pack with artwork and lyrics that quietly exude class and eminence. One not only receives 13 delightful tracks, but there is also a special CD-ROM video that also includes additional photo's and background information to the making of the video. The artwork by Arthur Rackham and Ferdinand Hears as well as the breathtaking photos by Donna Goertz provide an aristocratic vintage charm that one would be hard pressed to find anywhere else these days.



The Machine In The Garden are Summer Bowman and Roger Frace, two individuals from Texas who seem to have been brought to this generation through some Orwellian time machine. Their music delves between darkwave and medieval flavors while their many photos depict them as essences apart from the regular human race. Even the added video provides an almost mythical quality that adds to their timeless charm.

The quote on the inside spine of **Out of the Mists** states, "the metal in flowers, the automaton of power, the machine in the Garden of Eden." This pretty much poetically sums up what their work is about. Instead of being a musical collage of head banging tunes, the work conveys a fortitude that is at once natural and worldly while extracting the elemental forces inherent in all life forms.

As with all symbiotically healthy relationships, both artists contributed to the writing of the music and lyrics, one often expounding upon the others ideas. It is as if they have become the God and Goddess incarnate through their musical musings, which makes their band name that much more apropos.

Fates and Furies lures us in with deep dark tones that become a lightening flash excitation that seems to evolve like tones against metal brought to life. Militaristic drumming glides along with sounds that somewhat harkens to a medieval time. *Intrigue* follows like a forlorn wail from tortured souls of the past. It plays with dichotomous vocal intonations that belie a blessing as well as a curse. *The Unaware* was remixed for this CD and is also available on MP3.com for sampling. I must admit, Mp3 does not do this track any justice. To really get the full essence of the quality and mastering of this as well as all the other tracks, one simply must hear this work with the headphones on. It is as if humans are the unaware participants while the pixies and plants watch us create havoc in our mortal existence.

Valentine is a medieval flavored love and longing ballad that incorporates some of the arcane grammar of the day. Amazingly the artists take a guitar and make you swear you are hearing a mandolin. *Oh Dear* multi layers Bowman's vocals not unlike what one would come to expect in Pagan rounds and chants. This is totally acapella and beautifully constructed. *Failure* is Frace's turn at vocals and he does quite a good job. This is a somewhat commercial song in terms of the underground. Despite the self-recrimination of the lyrics, this song is far from a failure and will most likely find its way into a few DJ playlists before long.

Rusty Haloes is the type of song that is emotionally overpowering that some folks would rather shut down mentally than to admit to the provocative experience that it can lead to. This is sad really, because then they just don't "get" the music, which is a dalliance with the angelic realm on the razor's edge of metaphoric precocity. *Every Thing She Is* utilizes a similar form and structure to the song *Valentine* with an acoustic guitar at the forefront. Instead of a medieval feeling with the lyrics, we are given a more haunted and pained perspective of Summer's vocals. *Wasted Time* gently ticks away the seconds of our life while Bowman ruminates about the time that has needlessly escaped our grasp while we waited for the fulfillment to ease our heart and lives. Once again, she delves into a morose layer of pain that some would be more inclined to turn away from. She is the consummate tragic diva in this track.

Radiant is another "commercially" styled song that veers on the edge between goth and EBM which should rock the listeners in their seats or at least on the dance floors. I implore the club djs out there to put this track on their playlist. *Her Face* delivers such awesome minor chord guitar work that one would be inclined to keep hitting the replay button. It is a poetic song of beauty and loss that could almost work as a soundtrack for a vampire film. *Never Again* emulates the words that many folks declare after a bad experience. It is a painful yet gently delivered song, carried on an angel's wing. One would have to hear this to understand as it just recreates the environment in a moody yet fragile atmosphere. *Fade* begins rather simply and unassuming with minimal piano notes which give way to a slow fulminating electronic background. Bowman multi-layers the vocal harmonies yet again, delivering a timeless piece of music about another life and time beyond the mists.

The Machine in the Garden deliver lyrics with a hint of ambiguity mixed with metaphor. Some reviewers are clearly out of their league when trying to review this work simply because it is not for the mentally defective who have rarely read a book in their life. Bowman and Frace are quite capable of delivering commercial type music, as evidenced by the tracks *Failure* and *Radiant*. The beauty of their work is their innate ability to delve into the microcosmic scheme of life, rooting out emotions and magnifying them through a musical microscope. Despite the often painful lyrics, the music lulls one into a sense of splendor, as if finding the beauty in tragedy and pain.

The musical approach crests along on a variety of styles from goth, ethereal, medieval and world beat, often pairing and then veering off into a hybrid style similar to a wild garden whose beauty leaves us breathless. In spite of the growing trend towards more goth dance fare in the underground, there are those times when one needs a bit of respite from the whirlwind activity of their days. This CD is one of those that you can gratefully put on while lighting the candles and turning off the lights. It lulls us into a timeless space of wonder and longing while also refreshes us through the purging of emotions reflective from our vocalists. It harmoniously tunes us into the pulse-beat of the Universe while making us more aware of our own emotions and fragility.

Contact Information:

E-Mail: tmitg@io.com

Web: <http://www.tmitg.com/>

My mother, a meticulous housekeeper, often lectured my father about tracking dirt into the house. One day he came in to find her furiously scrubbing away at a spot on the floor and launching into a lecture. "I don't know what you've brought in," she said, "but I can't seem to get this out."

He studied the situation for a moment and, without a word, moved a figurine on the windowsill where the sun was streaming in. The spot immediately disappeared.

-Michele Donnelly-

One night at McChord Air Force Base in Washington, I was dispatched to check out the security fence where an alarm had gone off. The fence was at the end of the base runway. When I got to the scene, I found that a raccoon was the culprit, so I ran around and flapped my arms to scare off the animal.

Suddenly an air-traffic controller came over the public-address system and announced loudly, "Attention to the airman at the end of the runway. You are cleared for takeoff."

-Chad Blake-

We took a friend to dinner at a restaurant that offered free refills of nonalcoholic drinks. Before the main course arrived, she kept the waitress scurrying for refills. When our friend asked for yet another, the waitress raised an eyebrow and asked, "What did you have for lunch – a sponge?"

-Pamela Kay Purdy-